

# Harbinger

JANUARY and FEBRUARY 2006

VOL. 20 NO. 1

## Birds Abound

You just passed a group of people on a trail who were staring into a tree through binoculars and yelling out “white eye line,” “yellow rump patch,” and “red wing bars.” What were they doing? They

were bird-watching. Bird-watching is a very popular and growing outdoor activity.

Missouri is home to more than 400 bird species and many people are catching on to the excitement of seeing the diverse array of birds and identifying them by their external characteristics and beautiful songs. Birding is an outdoor activity that you can do any time of year, even in the winter.

Missouri has bird activity year-round with the assortment of birds always changing due to migration. Many bird species migrate, or travel large distances, as the seasons change in order to find sufficient food or to breed. In the fall, many birds fly south to warmer climates to continue to find food during the winter season. Some species of birds incredibly fly several thousands of miles to Central and South America. The following spring, they make the same trip northward for the large food supply and good breeding grounds. During the spring and summer, Missouri experiences an influx of birds. Rose-breasted grosbeaks, Baltimore orioles, yellow warblers, ruby-throated hummingbirds, and other species from the tropics come here to breed or pass through to other breeding areas. During the spring and autumn, you may see birds such as orange crowned warblers, lesser yellowlegs, and many types of waterfowl simply pass through on their long migration journey.

Winter may not sound like a productive birding season, but there are still many birds to see. We have many species of birds that live in Missouri year-round. Bright, red northern cardinals and striking woodpeckers add a splash of color to the winter landscape. Chickadees and tufted titmice fill the air with their songs in the quiet, winter forest. Many noble owls and hawks are actually easier to see in the winter because of the bare trees. Missouri is the winter grounds for several northern bird species. Missouri winters may not seem warm to you, but to a dark-eyed junco, purple finch, or white-crowned sparrow, it sure beats Canada’s winter. Even our nation’s symbol, the bald eagle, makes Missouri its winter home. More than 2,200 bald eagles are reported in Missouri each winter, making it one of the largest winter populations of eagles in the lower 48 states.

If you are interested in joining the birding craze, or if you’ve already caught the fever, we have several programs for all ages in January and February for you to enjoy. Call to register for such programs as birding workshops and hikes, owl prowls, and Little Acorns programs or stop by to participate in one of the Project FeederWatch dates. Most notable, we have our annual Eagle Days where you can learn all about bald eagles and even see a live eagle up close!

So bundle up, grab a pair of binoculars, head outside and open your eyes and ears to the sights and sounds of birds. You will discover a whole new, enjoyable part of winter.



## The View From The Bridge

Providing opportunities for families to learn about conservation together is a mission we've taken seriously for more than 17 years. To that end, we're celebrating the 18<sup>th</sup> annual Family Month at the nature center in February with the usual array of fun family-oriented activities. Besides the lineup of great programs including owl prowls, puppet shows, and the return of The Fishin' Magicians, we're challenging families to complete a road trip this year to explore outdoor Missouri. Ellen Ashbee and family of Springfield took this challenge last year and recorded their explorations into new areas in their journals, and they're glad they did.

Ellen Ashbee won the grand prize in the 2004/05 *Journaling With Lewis & Clark-A Discovery of Outdoor Missouri*, a Missouri Department of Conservation sponsored activity. She and her family, husband Mike and sons Brandon (age 13) and Jon (age 11), began their journey last fall at Shepherd of the Hills Conservation Center in Branson and completed their statewide tour of eight Conservation Department nature centers and interpretive sites before ending their expedition last May at Columbia Bottom in St. Louis. They received their award at the Springfield Conservation Nature Center in October.

This outdoor family enjoys hiking, canoeing, fishing, and camping and was delighted to win the grand prize of a complete camping equipment package for 4 people donated by Bass Pro Shops and Coleman Company. They are excited to use the new equipment during their monthly scout camp outs and on family vacations.

It's not too late for you or your family to participate in the second year of *Journaling With Lewis & Clark*. To make the activity even more challenging this year, a ninth site has been added with the opening last May of the new Cape Girardeau Conservation Campus. Visit each site listed in the journal to learn about a plant or animal Lewis & Clark encountered in Missouri on their way to and from the Pacific Ocean 200 years ago. Complete the activity at each site and get your journal entry validated before moving to the next location.

If you'd like to participate in this year's journaling activity, stop by the nature center or the Southwest Regional Office in Springfield, or visit the website at <http://www.MissouriConservation.org>. Participants have until May 31, 2006, to complete this year's journal but you better get started soon. Before leaving with their truckload of prizes, the Ashbee family took a moment to each complete a journal entry in this year's *Journaling With Lewis & Clark* activity. "Who knows," said Ellen Ashbee, "we might just win again next year." Happy Journaling!

*Linda*  
Linda F. Chorice,  
Nature Center Manager

## The Nature Nook



20%  
Off

### Featured Special: January/February **Where Eagles Soar** DVD

This 14-minute DVD tells the story of the bald eagle's decline in Missouri and its incredible return. Whether they're swooping to catch fish, perched, preening or feeding their young, the bald eagles will command your attention.

**Discounted price: \$8 plus tax.**

Heritage card discount does not apply.

## Thank You

The nature center would like to thank June Garder, Lisa Loughman, Mr. and Mrs. James Quinn, Ian and Seth Wooten, and John and Dawna Southern for donating various natural objects; Becky Matthews for bird books; and Vic Eckmann for original artwork. Special thanks to the following for helping with the Halloween Event: Wehrenberg Theaters/Campbell 16 Cine for supplying popcorn; Russ and Beverly Crapenhof for the loan of a program prop; and to all volunteers including Volunteer Naturalists and general volunteers Jeff Miller, Jill Dixon, John Heun, Ryan Maddox, Hayley Chorice, Bailey Greene, Fred Martinez, Shelly Dey, Drew Ceperly, and Michele Caskey. We appreciate all of you.

## Temporary Display

January/February

Nature Center

**Reflections** 2006

Photography by nature center visitors

*The Springfield Conservation Nature Center is located in southeast Springfield just west of US-65 off the James River Freeway (US-60). The area is open daily 8am to 9pm from March 1 to October 31, and 8am to 6pm during the remainder of the year. The building is open daily from 8am to 5pm year 'round. The building and area are closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. The area is closed to pets, bicycles, roller blades, hunting, fishing, collecting, and alcoholic beverages. No fees are charged.*

Phone: 417/888-4237 Fax: 417/888-4241 <[www.mdc.mo.gov/areas/cnc/springfd](http://www.mdc.mo.gov/areas/cnc/springfd)>



# Ask The Naturalist



Seasonal changes spark many questions. In this section, we answer some common questions about natural events.

**I have an invasion of European Starlings in my trees and yard and they have scared away other birds from my birdfeeders. What can I do to get rid of them?**

Harass them (clapping hands, banging on pots, spraying with hose) in early evening to discourage roosting. This may need to be repeated for several nights in order to be effective. Trim your trees to reduce their attractiveness as roosting sites, and withdraw all food and water during the harassing time. Also, starlings are not protected by law and may be shot (where allowed). Once food is offered again, choose seed that starlings don't like, such as black oil sunflower and niger thistle seed. Use suet feeders that are designed to force birds to hang upside-down.

**Why do some bald eagles nest in Missouri, while others do not?**

Breeding populations of eagles in Missouri were nonexistent from the early 1900s to about 1980. However, from 1981 through 1990, the Missouri Department of Conservation, along with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Dickerson Park Zoo, released 74 young bald eagles in Missouri to re-establish breeding populations in our state. This was successful since eagles tend to return to former nesting ranges to breed. Likewise, eagles born in other states or Canada will return to those areas to breed.

**Mark Your Calendar Now To Attend The**

## Naturescaping Symposium

**Saturday, March 25, 9am-4pm**

Call or stop by after March 1 to receive a flier of the day's activities.

## Chipping In . . . Sandy Vaughn

Volunteers exemplify the kinds of people that make up a community. Without volunteers, some community programs would suffer and other public services would become less available. Volunteers give their time, special talents, and gifts. That's exactly what Volunteer Naturalist Sandy Vaughn does. Driven by her enjoyment of children, she offers her time to assist with programs such as the Conservation Kids' Club, TEEN Club, and Insect-O-Rama. She made a great "Dorothy" from the *Wizard of Oz* during the Halloween Happening event. She has helped with Earth Day work projects, trash pickups, caving trips, and hiking activities.

Whether in a nature center program or in a classroom setting, her reward of teaching others comes from seeing their faces light up when they receive and embrace her message. Her caring and giving attitude are driving forces for her career choices. She worked four years as a substitute teacher for grades kindergarten through high school and is currently teaching a microbiology class at Ozarks Technical Community College. She also works as a medical technologist at Cox South Hospital. She finds time to donate her talents as a volunteer for the Watershed Committee of the Ozarks by making maps and monitoring springs.

Her experiences growing up on a farm near Diamond, Missouri, help explain her caring attitude toward animals. She raised and nurtured many farm animals including horses, cows, pigs, cats, and dogs. The family farm was also a haven for native wildlife which she grew to love.

She enjoys floating on many of Missouri's streams. When she's not out engulfed in the natural beauty of the Ozarks, you may find her biking, jogging, or playing softball. She combines many of these activities into one by participating in the Mark Twain National Forest Adventure Race. This race includes four components—biking, jogging, canoeing, and orienteering—and takes place through a scenic Ozark forest setting.

She clearly makes many contributions to the community and her giving attitude brightens all the faces around her. The next time you see Sandy working with people or hiking in the forest, please be sure to thank her for chipping in.

## Volunteer Milestones

Bob Ball .....	4,000 Hours	Jack Bowers .....	400 Hours
Betty Johnson .....	2,000 Hours	Sue Schuble .....	400 Hours
Mike Mihalik .....	1,500 Hours	Dana Tideman .....	400 Hours
Andy Busch .....	500 Hours	Carol Van Eaton .....	300 Hours

# EAGLE

Saturday, January 21

9am-4pm

Sunday, January 22

11am-4pm

# DAYS

at  
the  
nature  
center

- \* Indoor program featuring Phoenix, a live eagle from the Dickerson Park Zoo.
- \* Outdoor viewing opportunities



The nature center building and area will be closed on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day.

PRSR STD.  
US Postage Paid  
Jefferson City Mo  
Permit 274

Harbinger  
Springfield Conservation Nature Center  
Missouri Department of Conservation  
4600 South Chrisman  
Springfield, MO 65804-4931  
Phone 417/888-4237  
Fax: 417/888-4241



<<http://www.MissouriConservation.org>>





# January Events

SPRINGFIELD CONSERVATION NATURE CENTER



## REGISTRATION

Call the nature center at **417/888-4237** on or after **January 2** to register for January programs requiring registration. If you are unable to attend a program, please call to cancel so that someone on the waiting list may attend.

**The nature center building and area will be closed on Sunday, January 1.**

### 6 Owl Prowl Friday, 7-8:30pm

Nesting season comes early for owls, and they're already hooting in anticipation. Join us and the folks from Dickerson Park Zoo for a close-up look at live owls. After the indoor program, we'll head outside and try to call wild owls. Bring a flashlight. Families. Registration required.

### 7 Hiked It . . . Liked It! Weekend Hike Saturday, 9-11am

Enjoy a volunteer naturalist-guided hike on the trails. Families.



### 11 Story Time With Ms. Ladybug Wednesday, 11-11:30am



Join Volunteer Naturalist Joyce Tolliver as she reads a nature story and shares activities with your 2-6 year olds. Please, no organized groups.

### 14 Hiking Club Saturday, 8am-4pm

Don't let the cold stop you from enjoying a hike through the woods. Volunteer Naturalist Doug Gilliam will lead you on a "bushwhacking" hike through the woods at Fuson Conservation Area. Dress for the weather, pack a sack lunch, and wear sturdy, comfortable hiking shoes. Hike is four miles long and of moderate difficulty. Ages 18-adult. Registration required.

### 19 Riverbluff Cave Thursday, 7-8pm

Look inside Springfield's newest cave and explore it through the eyes of Executive Director Matt Forir. His program will cover information on conservation efforts, provide a look at new discoveries, and share secrets locked inside this ice-age cave. Ages 7-adult. Registration required.

**VIDEOS ARE SHOWN  
EVERY SUNDAY  
FROM 2-3pm.**

### 20 Nature And The Arts Waltz Across Missouri Conservation Road Show

Friday, 7-8:30pm

Two Missouri traditions, conservation and fiddling, converge in harmony with this dynamic presentation featuring beautiful images of natural Missouri and a live musical performance by Conservation Department Education Consultant Michael Fraser. Haunting tunes on the fiddle accompany a large screen video presenting natural scenery, people working in conservation, and people enjoying the natural resources of our great state. Ages 15-adult. Registration required.

### 21 Eagle Days Saturday, 9am-4pm

### 22 Eagle Days Sunday, 11am-4pm

We're celebrating the annual return of bald eagles to Lake Springfield.

This special event combines the indoor presence of Phoenix, a live eagle from Dickerson Park Zoo, with outdoor viewing opportunities. An

indoor program will be held every hour on the hour from 9am to 3pm (Sunday from 11am to 3pm). Stop by anytime and plan to spend about two hours. Families.

### 24 Beginning Catfishing Tuesday, 7-8pm

Come learn the basics of how to fish for catfish with Fisheries Management Biologist Rick Horton and Resource Technician Ron Bullard. They will present information on rod and reel angling as well as other methods. Also learn about catfish identification, tackle, baits, knots, and the best places to fish for catfish. Ages 7-adult. Registration required.

### 27 Owl Prowl and Evening Stroll

Friday, 6-9pm

Nesting season comes early for owls and they're already hooting in anticipation. The trails will be open and patrolled tonight (bring a flashlight and buddy). At 7pm, the folks from Dickerson Park Zoo will be in the auditorium to give you a close-up look at Missouri's owls. You'll learn about how these incredible predators have mastered surviving in darkness. Families.

### Project FeederWatch Count Dates:

Jan 3/4      Jan 31/Feb 1  
Jan 17/18    Feb 14/15  
Feb 28/March 1

Not only are we watching our winter birds but we're counting them as well. As participants in Cornell University's Project FeederWatch, we'll keep track of the numbers of each bird species found at the feeders. Drop by anytime to help us count or to simply enjoy watching the birds.

### 28 For Adults Only Bennett Spring Fly-Fishing Trip Saturday, 9am-Noon

Members of the Missouri Trout Fishermen's Association will be present at Bennett Spring State Park for some first-hand fly-fishing instruction. It's catch-and-release season at the park—participants must have a fishing license and a \$7 trout permit. (Both are available at the park.) Bring your own equipment if you have it. A limited number of rods will be available for use. Participants need to meet at the Bennett Spring hatchery building at 9am (directions will be provided). Ages 18-adult. Registration required.

### Conservation TEEN Club Fly-Fishing

Saturday, Noon-5pm

Spend a fun afternoon catch-and-release fly-fishing at Bennett Spring State Park. The Missouri Trout Fishermen's Association will be on hand to teach the basics before we try to land a big one. Participants must purchase a fishing permit (if 16 or older) and \$7 trout permit (regardless of age). Equipment, lunch, and transportation will be provided. Ages 12-17. Registration required.

### 31 Conservation Kids' Club Surviving Winter Tuesday, 6:30-7:45pm

"Oh, the weather outside is frightful . . ." and winter is anything *but* delightful! From hibernation to migration, wildlife have some fascinating ways of dealing with the rigors of winter. Learn eight different ways animals manage to live through this "frightful" season during this month's meeting. Bring a baby food jar with a lid. Ages 7-12. Please, no younger siblings and only one adult per group of kids. Registration required.

## Little Acorns

**Little Acorns** programs are for children 3-6 years and are 45-minutes in length. Please limit **Little Acorns** programs to one per month. Registration required.

### Wily Coyote

Howl like a coyote and hear some coyote folklore. Learn why the cunning nature of this animal has earned it the nickname "trickster."

Thursday, January 12, 11am or 1pm

### Tail Tales

Come hear some tales of how wild animals use their tails to help them survive.

Wednesday, January 18, 11am or 1:30pm

### Regal Eagles

Bald eagles are the kings of the sky. They are big, beautiful, and brawny. Come learn what other things make these special birds like royalty.

Friday, January 27, 11am or 1pm

Saturday, January 28, 10am





# February Events

SPRINGFIELD CONSERVATION NATURE CENTER



## REGISTRATION

Call the nature center at **417/888-4237** on or after **February 1** to register for February programs requiring registration. If you are unable to attend a program, please call to cancel so that someone on the waiting list may attend.

### 3 Just Wingin' It Friday, 4-5pm or 7-8pm

Sarah McCoy of Pittsburg State University takes their live birds of prey program on the road. Join us for an exciting program of fine-feathered fun and information starring a variety of wonderful raptors. Families. *Registration begins January 15.*

### 4 Hiked It . . . Liked It! Weekend Hike Saturday, 9-11am

Enjoy a volunteer naturalist-guided hike on the trails. Families.



### Hunter Education

**Saturday, 8am-5pm and Sunday, 1-5pm**

This 10-hour course is required for anyone born after January 1, 1967, who wants to hunt with firearms in Missouri. On Saturday, the course will be from 8am to 5pm (lunch break given—lunch not provided) and continue on Sunday from 1 to 5pm. You must pass a written test to be certified. Ages 11-adult. *Call today to register.*

### 8 Story Time With Ms. Ladybug

**Wednesday, 11-11:30am**



Join Volunteer Naturalist Joyce Tolliver as she reads a nature story and shares activities with your 2-6 year olds. Please, no organized groups.

### 10 Owl Prowl Friday, 7-8:30pm

Nesting season comes early for owls, and they're already hooting in anticipation. Join us and the folks from Dickerson Park Zoo for a close-up look at live owls. After the indoor program, we'll head outside and try to call wild owls. Bring a flashlight. Families. Registration required.

### 11 Conservation TEEN Club Birding Hike

**Saturday, 9am-3pm**

Missouri is home to over 400 bird species but most people know very few of them. Now is the time to learn! Join us for a birding hike at Bois D'Arc Conservation Area as Greater Ozarks Audubon Society members show us the basics of birding and help us find some feathered friends. Ages 12-17. Registration required.

### Winter Wildlife Survivors Puppet Show Saturday, 11-11:45am or 1-1:45pm

The question is: How do animals spend the winter? The answer is: store, snore, or soar. Join ace reporter "Calvin the Catfish" and friends to get more of the scoop on surviving winter. Families. Registration required.

### 16 Familiar Feathered Friends Thursday, 7-8pm

Attracting birds to your feeders is both easy and fun, but can you recognize your feathered friends? During this indoor program, Greater Ozarks Audubon Society members Sue Schuble and Lisa Berger teach how to identify many of Missouri's resident birds. Bring binoculars if you have them. Families. Registration required.

### 17 The Fishin' Magicians Friday, 7-8pm

Catch the action with their show full of magic, humor, fishin', and fun. Since they first premiered at the nature center in 1996, they have entertained and educated outdoor enthusiasts from coast-to-coast. During the past 5 years, they have performed at several events for ESPN. Get ready for a wet and wild time. Ages 5-adult. Registration required.

### 18 Conservation Crew Saturday, 8am-2pm

We're making a return trip to Rocky Barrens Conservation Area for glade restoration by removing invading cedar trees. We need people to drag trees and branches to the wood chipper. Afterwards, you're welcome to take cedar chips for your landscaping needs. Meet at the nature center and carpool. Bring gloves, sturdy footwear, and dress for the weather. Lunch is provided. Ages 18-adult. Registration required.

### Finding Our Familiar Feathered Friends Saturday, 10am-Noon

Search for our familiar feathered friends on a guided trail hike led by members of the Greater Ozarks Audubon Society. Hike will be on the nature center trails. Bring binoculars if you have them and dress for the weather. Families. Registration required.

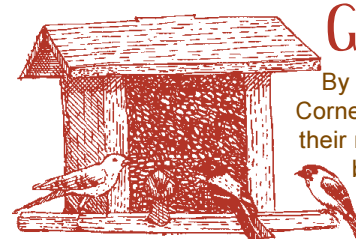
### 19 For Adults Only Winter Bird Hike Sunday, 1-6pm

Join us for a Sunday afternoon hike and an opportunity to view waterfowl and other migratory birds. Meet at the nature center and carpool to Shepherd of the Hills Fish Hatchery. Bring water and binoculars if you have them. Hike is four miles and of moderate difficulty. Ages 18-adult. Registration required.

### 21 The Rediscovery Of The Ivory-Billed Woodpecker

**Tuesday, 7-8pm**

The recent sightings of the ivory-billed woodpecker in Arkansas created quite a stir throughout the birding world. Here is your chance to learn about the search for this long thought to be extinct bird from one of the species recovery team members. David Luneau was a member of the core team on the most recent year-long search and is a veteran of previous searches. He confirmed the rediscovery of the ivory-billed woodpecker in the Big Woods of eastern Arkansas in 2004 with the first video ever taken of the bird. This program is cosponsored by the Greater Ozarks Audubon Society. Ages 12-adult. Registration required.



## Great Backyard Bird Count February 17 - 20

By participating in the Great Backyard Bird Count (a joint project of Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology) you can help document where birds are and track changes in their numbers compared to previous years, helping scientists paint a picture of the state of birds this winter. You can count birds in your backyard, a local park, or other natural areas on one or all four count days. Stop by the nature center and pick up a packet with data sheets and further information.

### 24 Family Fun Night Amazing Amphibians Friday, 7-9pm

From tiny spring peepers to the large hellacious-looking hellbender, we share our state with more than 40 species of amphibians. Bring your family and spend an evening learning about these amazing animals through programs, games, and activities. Jeff Briggler, Conservation Department Herpetologist, will present programs at 7:30 and 8:15pm (best for ages 7-adult) to share information about current conservation efforts and the role these fragile creatures play in the environment. Play Amphibian Jeopardy, make slime, and more. Families.

### 25 Hiking Club Saturday, 8am-5pm

The forest seems to be asleep during winter which makes it a peaceful and tranquil place to visit. Leave your worries behind and join Volunteer Naturalist Mike Mihalik for a winter hike through the Mark Twain National Forest at Noblett Lake. Dress for the weather, pack a sack lunch, and wear sturdy, comfortable hiking shoes. Hike is five miles and of moderate difficulty. Ages 18-adult. Registration required.

### 28 Conservation Kids' Club Makin' Tracks Tuesday, 6:30-7:45pm

Okay, "Super Sleuths," it's time to put on your thinking caps and help solve the mysteries animals leave behind in their tracks. Ages 7-12. Please, no younger siblings and only one adult per group of kids. Registration required.

## Little Acorns

**Little Acorns** programs are for children 3-6 years and are 45-minutes in length. Please limit **Little Acorns** programs to one per month. Registration required.

### Greet The Groundhog

It's February and time to celebrate groundhogs. Will spring be early or late? Only the shadow knows. Come out to learn about groundhogs and their shadows.

**Saturday, February 4, 11am**

### Beautiful Bluebirds

The eastern bluebird is one of Missouri's most popular animals and our state bird. Bring your most popular preschooler to discover this "symbol of happiness."

**Friday, February 17, 11am or 1pm**

**Saturday, February 18, 11am**

### Foxes In The Fields And Forests

What kinds of foxes live in the fields and forests? Pounce on this program to find out facts about fox families. Fold a fox and make a fox face to take home.

**Wednesday, February 22, 11am or 1pm**